

PÉRDIDA Y SUSTITUCIÓN DE ARABISMOS EN ESPAÑOL

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Next to Latin, Arabic is the language that had the most impact on the evolution of Spanish until the sixteenth century and, consequently, the Arabic component of the Spanish lexicon has received much scholarly attention in Hispanic linguistics. However, the great majority of studies tend to compile alphabetically-arranged lists of loanwords and examine Arabisms from a cultural perspective, viewing them as cultural artifacts that reveal the impact of one culture upon the other rather than as linguistic signs pertaining to a language system. Nevertheless, this is not the approach taken by Mihai Enăchescu in his book, *Pérdida y sustitución de arabismos en español* (*Loss and Replacement of Arabisms in Spanish*), recently published by SZTE JATEPress.

Mihai Enăchescu's book, which is the result of several years of focused research, consists of a careful selection of Arabic loanwords that the author analyzes in minute detail, both diachronically and synchronically, in an attempt to distinguish chronological strata, social background, routes of transmission and the vitality and degree of integration of these items into the Spanish lexicon or, as is the case, their loss and replacement with lexical items of different origins, mostly Latinisms. The author's monographic treatment of individual word histories aims to determine the fate and the status of Arabisms in the Spanish lexical stock. In particular, the author shows that, while some Arabic loanwords have been fully preserved in contemporary Spanish and others have been lost, many have been replaced with lexical items borrowed from other sources or derived by means of word formation processes characteristic of Spanish, typically suffixation. What is more, in exceptional cases, some Arabisms have been replaced with other lexical items of Arabic origin.

Following this line of investigation, the author has structured his book into eight chapters, the first of which provides a historical background for the borrowing of Arabisms into Spanish, and the rest are illustrations of the three possible situations outlined above. With the exception of the introductory chapter and the conclusions, the rest of the sections focus on a particular semantic field and are structured along the same lines: some general remarks regarding the semantic field under investigation are followed by the analysis proper, and some concluding remarks; in addition, each 'lexical entry' for the selected items includes information concerning the meaning of the item, its etymology, relevant attestations in various kinds of corpora and the author's

commentaries regarding the uncovered linguistic data, which are included in a classification of the analyzed items from the perspective of their status in contemporary Spanish.

The first chapter provides a historical background for the borrowing of Arabisms into Spanish by focusing on the socio-political and cultural realities of Al-Andalus, the Muslim-ruled territory covering almost the entire Iberian Peninsula. The author skillfully organizes a significant amount of historical data into a concise presentation that brings to the fore a number of observations pertinent to the analysis provided in the subsequent chapters. The reader learns that, from a sociolinguistic perspective, Al-Andalus was a diglossic society in which Hispano-Arabic, the language of the Muslim conquerors, was the high variety, and Mozarabic, the language of the conquered Christian population and the direct continuation of the Latin brought to the peninsula by the Romans, represented the low variety. At the same time, the Arabic-speaking population was also diglossic in so far as Hispano-Arabic, the vernacular variety, coexisted with Classical Arabic, the scholarly written language. Access to the latter allowed for the translation of Arabic treaties on mathematics, astronomy, medicine and alchemy and the dissemination of Arabic scientific knowledge and Islamic culture. Toledo was the centre of Hispano-Arabic culture, where Jewish scholars translating Arabic texts into Romance worked alongside Latin-speaking scholars, who then translated those texts into Latin. As the author points out, from a linguistic perspective, this persistent language-contact situation clearly facilitated the assimilation of lexical items from Arabic into the Romance varieties spoken at the time. However, he goes on to show that, as the Reconquest progressed, (Hispano-)Arabic lost prestige in Christian Spain, the linguistic balance turning in favour of the northern varieties of Hispano-Romance. This situation led to an attitude of rejection of the Arabic element in Hispano-Romance, which peaked in the sixteenth century, when Renaissance scholars advocated the renewal of the lexicon in favor of the more Latin element.

The second chapter focuses on the lexical field of fruits and vegetables. The author has chosen it as an illustration of one of the possible directions of evolution of Arabisms in Spanish, which he accounts for relying on extralinguistic elements. Specifically, this semantic field illustrates the tendency towards conservation, as the lexicon of Arabic origin denoting fruits and vegetables has been preserved almost in its entirety. As the author explains, this is due to the fact that these terms denote staple food items in our everyday diet, so, naturally, they would not undergo significant semantic changes. Nevertheless, his analysis reveals that not all items have retained the same vitality. Of the 25 terms investigated, three are seldom used, given the rarity of the referents they stand for, like, for instance, *azamboá* ('citron') – a yellow fruit like a large lemon, while four others have fallen into disuse, as is the case of *alcanería* and *alcaucil*, which have both been, understandably, replaced with *alcachofa* ('artichoke'), since they are subspecies of this vegetable. The other two, *alfónzigo* ('pistachio') and *alficoz* ('cucumber') have been replaced with *pistacho* (a loanword from Greek) and *cobombro* (an

inherited word), respectively. Last but not least, the author discusses two curious cases of replacement of a word of Romance origin with an Arabism (*oliva* ('olive') with *aceituna* and *pastinaca* ('carrot') with *zanahoria*), a development that runs counter to the expected switch to Romance-related terms.

The tendency towards conservation of Arabisms in Spanish contrasts with the opposite phenomenon, i.e., the loss of lexical items of Arabic origin. To study this direction of development, the author selected the semantic field of money and measurement units. His assumption was that all the lexical items pertaining to this field would have fallen into complete disuse due to historical reasons, in particular, the introduction of the metric system of measurement in 1849 and of the single currency (the peseta) in 1868, which would have turned the Arabisms archaic/obsolete as they lost their referents. However, his analysis demonstrates that, again, the situation is not as cut and dried as expected. Of the 16 terms he investigated, ten did become archaic, or, at most, still part of regional dialects, but six have remained in general use, three of them with the original meaning (*quilate* ('carat'), *quintal* ('quintal') and *tara* ('tare weight')), and the other three with new signifiers (*adarme* (< 'dirham') in *ni un adarme* ('not a whit'), *arroba* (formerly a weight unit, now a polysemous word, standing for, among other things, the @ symbol) and *maquila* (< 'measurement unit') with the restricted meaning of 'textile manufacturing' or 'factory').

While the semantic fields of fruits and vegetables, on the one hand, and of money and measurement units, on the other hand, represent the two poles in the evolution of Arabisms within the Spanish lexical stock, with the former displaying a definite overall tendency towards preservation and the latter a predisposition towards decline/loss, the rest of the lexical fields investigated in Chapters 4 to 8 are all illustrative of the same type of linguistic change – replacement/substitution. To study the replacement of Arabisms, the author investigates semantic fields as diverse as those of general professions, military ranks and public offices, medieval alchemy (minerals, metals and chemical products), medieval medicine (diseases and cures, potions, mineral substances, plants and distillates), as well as that of medieval cosmetic products. Far from being randomly selected, the semantic fields analyzed in this book mirror the significant impact the Islamic scientific knowledge and culture had on the Iberian Peninsula in the Middle Ages; another aspect reflected in these chapters is that most Arabisms were nouns designating material and cultural innovations of the Middle East for which the Hispano-Romance of the time did not have suitable terms. What is more, it is worth noticing the considerable number of items per field that the author analyzes, which reinforces the idea of a pervasive Arabic influence in this part of the world.

As for their fate in the Spanish lexical stock, the author demonstrates that, while some of the terms in these lexical fields continue to survive in contemporary Spanish with their old meanings (*albañil* ('stonemason, bricklayer'), *alcanfor* ('camphor'), *jarabe* ('syrup'), *momia* ('mummy')) or with new meanings (*alcalde* (from 'judge' to 'mayor'), *azafata* (from 'lady-in-waiting' to 'stewardess'), *álcali* (from 'saltwort' to 'alkali'), *alcohol*

(from 'antimony' to 'alcohol'), *jebe* (from 'vitriol, alum' to 'rubber')), and others have completely disappeared (*almotalafe/almotalefe* ('silk goods inspector'), *tíbar* (adj. 'golden, made of pure gold'), *bezoar* ('bezoar')), most of the lexical items under investigation in these chapters have undergone replacement.

Replacement or substitution is a two-layered kind of lexical change as it encompasses both the addition to and the elimination of elements from the lexicon of a given language. Thus, in the present book, the author investigates not only the fate of Arabisms, but also the effects of their disappearance or decline. He shows that their falling into disuse for extralinguistic reasons (the disappearance of the referents they stood for from the real world, the rejection of the Arabic element for being perceived as the Other in Christian Spain, the advent of the Renaissance and its focus on everything Latin and Greek, etc.) has been paralleled by the introduction of new lexical items with the same referents either by means of language-internal derivational process (affixation and compounding) or via lexical borrowings and other creative processes. The new items that have replaced the Arabisms are of many different kinds: Latinisms (*adaliá* > *capitán* ('captain'), *alfaquín* > *médico*, *doctor* ('doctor'), *acíbar* > *áloe* ('aloe')), inherited words (*alcarceña* > *yero* (*hierro*) ('ervil'), *oroꝛuz* > *regaliz* ('licorice'), *almoraduj* > *mejorana* (*mayorana*) ('marjoram')), derivatives obtained by affixation and compounding (*aliacán* > *ictericia* / *morbo regio* ('jaundice'), *albarraꝛ* > *hierba piojera* / *estafisagria* (Latinism) ('stavesacre'), *algafacán* > *dolor de corazón* ('chest pain')), borrowings from other Romance languages like Italian (*álcali* > *sosa* ('soda'), *albucema* > *lavanda*, *lavándula* ('lavander')) and Catalan (*aꝛamefe* > *oropimente* ('sulphide of arsenic'), *álcali* > *sosa* ('soda')), and, exceptionally, other Arabisms (*alcaller* > *alfarero* ('potter'), *cárabe* > *ámbar* ('amber'), *aꝛófar* > *latón* ('brass')). Despite their diversity, what these new items share is the presence of an undeniable Latin element in their creation, whether we are considering the group of Latinisms or that of inherited words (still of Latin origin), the derivatives formed with Latin affixes or the loanwords from other Romance languages. This is a natural reflection of a historical reality – the development of a (Europeanized) linguistic consciousness, beginning with the sixteenth century, which places Spanish in the large family of Romance languages.

In the final chapter of his book, the author reviews his findings and reiterates the main conclusion of his analysis, namely, that, contrary to expectations, the status of Arabisms in the Spanish lexical stock is not as clear-cut as anticipated, either diachronically or synchronically. No semantic field investigated here has yielded cut and dried results; as he has demonstrated, some Arabisms have been lost or have fallen into disuse, surviving only in regional dialects or as archaisms, whereas others have continued as integral part of the Spanish lexicon, although with different degrees of vitality and some even with new meanings. Moreover, those whose vitality has declined have been replaced by a variety of lexical items of Latin-related origins (Latinisms, inherited words, Romance words, etc.).

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To conclude, Mihai Enăchescu's investigation into the loss and replacement of Arabisms in the Spanish lexicon is a thoroughly-detailed study built on a plethora of multilayered information of historical, social, cultural, sociolinguistic, semantic, lexical, and etymological nature. A most welcome contribution to the fields of Hispanic lexicology and historical linguistics, Mihai Enăchescu's book provides the reader with a novel perspective on a topic that so far has not been extensively researched.